

The Lion's Game

Text and Music © 2001 Dennis Werner

Cast: (Elenco)

Bailiff: Ondina Berndt

Queen Eleanor: Ana Cláudia Ambrosi Lopes

Defendant: André Franzoni

Prosecutor: Claudia Ondrusek

King Richard: Rogério Guilherme

Knights: Eneleo Silva, Cezar de Castro, André Franzoni

Nuns: Lee Yi-Ching, Claudia Ondrusek

Archbishop of Tyre: Dennis Werner

Soldiers: Eneleo Silva, Cezar de Castro, André Franzoni

Joana: Ondina Berndt

Archer: Marco Aurélio Castro Rodrigues

Keyboards, clarinet, recorder: Dennis Werner

ACT I

Queen Eleanor's Court of Love, Poitiers, 1168

Bailiff:

Now stand all prosecutors, just
All you defendants, vile
The Court of Love will now begin
So clear the center aisle.
And to the Queen's wise judgments
Your fates now reconcile.

Chorus:

Hail gracious Queen, Queen Eleanor
Hail judge of wisdom, evermore

Eleanor:

What sordid case have we today
Of a lady badly treated?
What errant knight has now his love
Abused or scorned or cheated?
Or broken solemn promises
Or his love's chastity entreated?

Bailiff:

A case of callous thievery!
An act of cowardice!
The wicked crime is this good judge:
This Knight just stole a kiss!

Chorus:

Such villainous harassment
To chivalry's embarrassment!

Eleanor:

Speak knight and watch your tongue
Say something to your benefice.

Knight:

Her charms and beauty, they're to blame
For all my bold advances
How could a knight ever resist
A jewel that so entrances
Forgive my brash intrusions
On my lady's modest airs
My acts spring from sweet passion
Desires my lady shares.
I vow I'll love eternally
My lady's wit and style
Her graceful form, her lovely face
Her all alluring smile.

His lady:

He loves my wit and graceful form?
What fickle love is this
That fades as fast as aging flesh
And goes no further than a kiss?

How could I trust a vow so thin.
His "eternal" lasts a day
He'll need much better arguments
Before I'll say okay.
Pure love is a universal
Not bound to material.
One can't love flesh eternally
But only things ethereal.

Knight:
My lady fair will ne'er be loved
Of material substance she is made
And so she is a singular
And thus her very self will fade.
But I can love eternally
The memories of her charms
And love today her splendid flesh
Her face, her lips, her arms.

(turning to his lady)
Why worry about tomorrow's cares
Tomorrow you'll not be you
Think of yourself today, my love
Let's enjoy a rendezvous.

Eleanor:
Good knight you've argued admirably
With skillful dialectic
But still I fear your stolen kiss
Was just a bit too hectic
Your reason also fails at times
Your love is not eternal
You and your memories, too, will fade
So heed counsel most maternal

You'll savor each moment's sweet delights
Since neither will be forever
But take good care of future selves
In all that you endeavor.

Chorus
Just Queen, Noble Judge
This wise sentence, don't begrudge

(Exeunt all but Eleanor and Prince Richard)

Eleanor:
Prince Richard, Count of fair Poitou
Did you note how each passed on the blame
How both the others' words poo-poo
To crush the logic of the others claim
How words when sung sound much more true
And words when stuttered sound totally lame
These lessons one day will be precious to you
To increase wealth and to further fame
The troubadour's art, the politician's coup
The warrior's plots and the king's acclaim
Learn all of these skills and whatever you do
Be always ready to play the game

Richard:
If life is a game, then I'll play it well
In battle or discourse, you know I do well.
Athletic or intellectual. All games are an exquisite thrill
Your training's most effectual.
I play to win, and win I will
Administration's for the English boors
Who shun all risk, and whose lives are so plain
They live with wives and have no paramours
With nothing lost and nothing to gain

And everyone loves the winner of a game
No matter how useless, evil or dull
A hero in sports can then never feel blame
As long as he gives a spectacle.

Eleanor:

With logic or sword, you'll others compel
To honor our lineage, immortelle.
My son you'll rival Arthur's fame
So long as you like a good game
How proud a mother I will be
To have a son who's such a prodigy
They'll cheer your bold and heroic deeds
And troubadours praise your armor and steeds
They'll all forget all of their primary needs
Like food and clothing and their planting seeds.
Good kings are not meant to be dull bureaucrats,
Concerned with wealth and proletariats,
To hedge all their bets with humdrum caveats
Just games of style for aristocrats.

ACT II, Gisors, 1188

Knights:

In jousting finery we're all bedecked
We mount our steeds to draw respect
From rivals we would soon deject
And maidens fair whom we protect

The tournaments in spring serve well
To attract and conquer a demoiselle
Or to assess the strength of foes
Without a war and all its woes
Like bucks who test each other's force
When horns they lock on the breeding course
Without great harm the loser departs
To try next year his fighting arts

Prince Richard shuns all our tournaments
And all our splendid ornaments
Instead he rushes off to war
He plunders rapes and savors gore
Young maids he never tries to win
With words and dances masculine
Instead of pledging love so dear
He conquers maidens using fear
Although for us he's never smiled
I think this bully is far too wild
For us to scorn or to oppose
Or give allegiance to his foes

Nuns:

The kings and barons all at war
Have ruined fields and towns
The church's monasteries, too,
Have had their own shakedowns
We've got to stop this bickering
That takes away our wealth
They claim they fight for justice and truth,
But ruin all our health
And what is justice but a word
To justify their greed
They claim ancestral rights to seize
What their fathers just decreed.
King Henry and his offspring too,
King Philip and his knights
Have gathered to negotiate
And put an end to fights
Their truces never lasted long
And Henry's sons are wary
They'll fight for all their inheritance
And whom they want to marry
Alliances change every day
So is it any wonder
That fields are burned and maidens weep
And castles rent asunder?

Now Tyre's archbishop has arrived
He's talking to the prior

He'll give a most combative speech
Crusaders to incite
I'm sure he'll give a stirring talk
To aid Jerusalem's plight
The kingdom fell to Saladin's sword
It's time to make things right
So let the Brits and French now take
Their wars to another place
And leave us here at home in peace
Far away from war's disgrace

Archbishop of Tyre:

Hail kings and nobles, knights and squires
I bring bad news of what this Kurd conspires
He has conquered Holy Jerusalem
And would all Christians to the sword condemn

Only Tyre remains in the Holy Land
To protect worthy Christians
From these infidel bands
I beg you to take on a sacred vow
And defend fair Tyre and Christianity now.
You knights and yeomen, your blood must boil
To think of the Turks on our Lord's holy soil
They abuse its women, its riches despoil
To you good Christians, belongs this spoil
And you good royal chancellors
With your kings and rulers off at wars
You can each in his own way procure
High taxes for any expenditure
And you good farmers with fine strong backs
I'm sure you would rather pay a tax
While your kings and lords are off in battle
Than risk their plunder of fields and cattle
From priests to cardinals, I'm sure you'll agree
If kings must bow to the Papal See
Then the Church will finally be in command
And Christians safe in the Holy Land
You stalwart mercenaries
War will give your necessities
It will give you food and clothes and tents
And salaries and lots of armaments.
And so good kings I am sure you'll see
How this sacred vow is a strategy
To please your subjects and increase fame
And give you indulgence for moral blame.

Act III Road to Jerusalem, 1191

Soldiers (sacking bodies after an ambush):

Jaffa, Acre, Ascalon and Tyre
We've rescued from the Kurdish foe
Only Richard our King could us all inspire
To kill with lance and crossbow
And now with Jerusalem so close at hand you'd abandon us to our plight?
What can Philip of France now give to you,
Now that he's abandoned the fight?
You will surely regret having missed all the fun
Of keeping hostages subdued
Of tortures given and ransoms won
and breaking what's tabooed.

But here comes Richard on his horse
With Arab heads in tow
For murder he has no remorse
He does it just for show
I'm sure he'll make it very clear
Just why this war's so grand
If you stay long enough to hear
I'm sure you'll understand
King Richard could you please explain
Just why this war goes on?
Material rewards have we to gain?
Will evil be thus forgone?

King Richard:

My friends, this war is but a game
Of honor and wealth and fame
But honor's the key to warfare you see
It's what hearts and minds inflame
Defend your honor with zest
Show others that you are the best
With a masculine grin, show that you always win
At any foolhardy test
Now three types of honor there be
To show your supremacy.
There's personal talent and courage so gallant
And then moral integrity.
My personal talents are known.
I've never been overthrown
My body so strong, my ploys never wrong
I easily rivals dethrone
With personal courage I am blessed,
As all of my acts attest.
Even when sick in bed, when others have fled
I still pursue my quest
My personal virtue's unspoiled
For justice I've always toiled
To right what is wrong with things that belong
To nobility so unspoiled.
With promises I am true
Their ransom when it came due
So true to my word, with nerves undeterred
I those three thousand prisoners slew.
But leave us, we don't much care
A coward we'll easily spare
For those who would flee, in vile infamy
Life only can end in despair.

(Exeunt soldiers. Enter Joana)

Richard:

King Philip's troops have gone away
My own troops are now demoralized
Prince John can now his oath betray
And leave my empire jeopardized
Both he and Philip now try to seize
The lands I left too unprotected
Defending the Cross while overseas
My kingdom I've left too much neglected
This crusade must end without delay.
I need a truce with Saladin
Peace with honor I must portray
I must exit with my name come clean.
Dear sister the answer is in your hands
Saladin's brother will share with you
Jerusalem and other lands
If with marriage we can join the two.

Joana:

"Peace with honor" that's what you'd call it
You would wed me to an infidel.
I beg you please, now recall it.
To this great dishonor I rebel.
Your goal was always to slaughter the Turks
To stamp out this blasphemous creed
And now you propose with cynical smirks
A tie you would once never concede.

Richard:

Dear sister one's goals can always change
Like the wind they move in different routes
What is right or wrong can range
To conform to all our heart's pursuits.
Any goal can seem lofty if you spin a good tale
Make money, run hurdles or win at chess.
Seek the source of the Nile or the Holy Grail.
Find the age of the earth or save a princess.

It makes no difference just what you search
If you can succeed at what you began.

Joana:
So like Prince John, brothers, indeed,
You mock the Holy Church
And every true value known to man

Richard:
Joana dear sister, I beg you please,
Save me from these hostilities.

Joana:
With values that change like a passing breeze
No wonder you make only enemies.

ACT IV Chalus, 1199

Eleanor:
Dear Richard, my son, I heard you were shot
And lying on your death bed
The news has left me so distraught
I ran here with arms outspread
You were always my favorite son, you know
Over Henry or Geoffrey or John,
Your courage and wit,
They make my heart glow
On your valor I'll always fawn
How could any in England ever begrudge
The taxes we raised for your ransom
A warrior whose name none dare smudge
And a ruler ever so handsome
And what is more just and fair and wise
Than restoring that Holy town?
By our Lord and Savior, history's heir
Is a Latin Christina crown.
Richard:

But mother I feel while lying here
Perhaps I did the wrong thing
Although successful I appear.
I have not been a good king

Eleanor:
This is nonsense, you've done what a king should do.
Defending your lands and your rights
Your great unbending honor, the Arabs you slew,
Makes a legend that song invites

Richard:
But justice means giving to each his due,
To reap just what you sow.
With equal rights for all in view
Disparities to overthrow.
So come here brave archer, sporty child
Where's the justice in killing a king?
Did you think it right to act so wild
Can you thus more justice bring?

Archer:
I sought to protect what was left of my kin
In the hopes that they might flee.
And to be quite honest and genuine,
I don't know what justice could be.
And just what do you mean by equality?
Equal assets is that what you saw?
Or perhaps equal opportunity?
Or equal treatment in questions of law?
Can these different equalities all coalesce
If people are not the same?
When some work hard and some work less

Equal treatments won't give the same.
And so can we then reap just what we sow
Equal assets would all get upset

And can we deserve our joy or woe?
Is everything credit or debt?

Do we really want all the same?
The gentleman and the dame?
The same in height, with bodies slight
Or having the very same name?
Should we reap just what we sow?
The joys and all the woe?
Is it really so vital to ask for requital

Should things be quid pro quo?
Can one really pay for a crime?
Or calculate payments in time?
And what can you build for one who was killed
That will settle accounts to the dime?

Eleanor:
I agree that differences should be respected
A king should be judged according to his day and time
All agree that it could surely never be objected
That King Richard's rule is a paradigm
of kingly duties never left neglected
Of power and force and courage.

Archer:
At any time there's more than one standard
Of how to judge what is right or wrong
The Capetian flowers praise peace as grander
Plantagenet lions praise what's brutish and strong.
And the Church's values have often meandered
And any value can be put to song.
But promoting well-being, this value's the same
For different cultures and different times
Though requiring a different immediate aim
Or changing what are considered as crimes
The important thing is to choose a game
That to greater well-being always climbs.
It's well-being the thing we should strive for
It's the reason we all are alive for.
To find what is best, for us and the rest
For this kings and laws should contrive for.
For well-being means thinking ahead
While justice stirs up what's dead
Encourage what's good, that's just what laws should.
And not stir up hatreds instead.
And as far as incentives might go.
The reaping of just what you sow,
It may be a goal, and good for the soul,
If it helps to make well-being grow.
And equalities are great
If resentments they abate
But if we are compelled, all alike to be held
Then this surely we would all hate.

Eleanor:
But stop.
King Richard now is dying
This noble soul,
Who deserved so much better
Than a peasant's arrow mortifying
So this archer now, you'll bind and fetter
Killing a king well justifying
a villain's death carried out to the letter.

Archer:
Kill me you may, but not out of merit
We can deserve neither grace nor doom
If some are lucky and fortune inherit
Let not envy us consume.
Resentment and hatred we must forbear it
And leave our hearts open for love to resume
Right now revenge may mark the day
But I have hope in a future near
When laws and politics both might value the way

Of seeking well-being as something so dear
that thoughts of resentment will then all give way
and visions of goodness and mercy appear.